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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 005418

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [UNSC](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIANS SURPRISED BY EXCLUSION FROM UN IRAQ GROUP OF FRIENDS

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: THE MFA HAS EXPRESSED ITALY'S INDIGNATION AT ITS EXCLUSION FROM THE RECENTLY CREATED UN IRAQ GROUP OF FRIENDS AND REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN GETTING ITALY INCLUDED IN THE GROUP. WE UNDERSTAND DEFENSE MINISTER MARTINO HAS MADE THE SAME POINT TO SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND THAT FM FRATTINI WILL DO THE SAME TO SECRETARY POWELL. WE HAVE ADVISED THE ITALIANS TO APPROACH SYG ANNAN DIRECTLY. SHOULD THE SYG SUPPLANT THE CURRENT SEVEN-PLUS-FIVE-PLUS-FIVE GROUP WITH A LARGER "FRIENDS OF IRAQ", HOWEVER, WE RECOMMEND THE USG SUPPORT INCLUSION OF ITALY, WHICH CAN BE COUNTED ON TO SUPPORT OUR APPROACH IN IRAQ. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) LUCA FERRARI, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, AND LUIGI MACCOTTA, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, BROUGHT UP THE RECENT CREATION OF THE UN IRAQ GROUP OF FRIENDS CONSISTING OF THE P-5, NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, SELECTED UNSC MEMBERS AND OTHERS. THEY STATED THAT THE GROUP WAS A POSITIVE INITIATIVE BUT WERE SURPRISED AND OFFENDED THAT ITALY HAD NOT BEEN INCLUDED. ITALY IS THE THIRD LARGEST PRESENCE ON THE GROUND AND BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ITALY HAVE MADE A COMMITMENT TO THE US-LED EFFORT IN IRAQ. DUE TO THIS LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND ITS COMMITMENT IN IRAQ, THEY FELT ITALY SHOULD BE A MEMBER OF THE GROUP.

13. (C) POL M/C TOLD FERRARI THAT THE GROUP WAS CREATED BY UNSYG ANNAN AND URGED ITALY TO APPROACH ANNAN DIRECTLY. FERRARI SAID ITALY WOULD APPROACH ANNAN, BUT BELIEVES THAT THE US WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING THIS INITIATIVE AND SURPRISED THAT WE HAD NOT ENSURED ITALY'S INCLUSION.

14. (C) COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD SIMILAR PLEAS BEFORE FROM THE ITALIANS ABOUT THE NEED FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO IRAQ TO BE DULY AND PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED. THERE IS SOME CREDENCE IN THE ARGUMENT THAT NOT DOING SO WILL MAKE IT HARDER FOR THE GOI TO JUSTIFY ITS ROLE IN IRAQ TO THE ITALIAN PUBLIC. IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE, THE PROBLEM IS EXACERBATED BY ITALY'S TENDENCY TO FEEL PUNCHED IN THE GUT WHENEVER IT'S EXCLUDED FROM A GROUP THAT INCLUDES GERMANY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SYG'S SEVEN-PLUS-FIVE-PLUS-FIVE GROUP MAY BE SUPPLANTED BY A LARGER "FRIENDS OF IRAQ." SHOULD THAT HAPPEN, WE URGE USG SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION OF THE ITALIANS, WHO COULD BE COUNTED ON TO SUPPORT US PRIORITIES WITHIN THE GROUP. END COMMENT.
SEMBLER

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